

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING : 08 February 2016

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

**(AE16/059) - Circumstances prior to journey to Australia - Programme 2.2:
Migration**

Senator Macdonald, Ian (L&CA 91) asked:

CHAIR: Do we have any knowledge of the types of places of residence that these people have before they embark upon their journey to Australia? Is that the sort of intelligence that is collected?

Mr Pezzullo: I would not characterise it as intelligence that is collected. Certainly, when persons are interviewed as to their claims, it is inevitably the case that matters of their living circumstances arise. As to how we catalogue that and how we, if you like, aggregate that data, I might just see if colleagues at the table can assist or other colleagues can come forward. The short answer is: yes, we might well have an awareness of their living circumstances simply because we have to interview them about their previous lives. Are you asking about things like housing and access to—

CHAIR: I assume many of them would allege that they came from refugee camps somewhere in the Middle East.

Mr Pezzullo: Some do, and some say that they have been living in remote areas, seeking to avoid other ethnic groups. There are all different sorts of life stories that people bring to these circumstances. I do not hear the rush of thundering hooves behind me. What we will do is take on notice whether we aggregate the data that we pick up through those interviews, to see if we can answer your question. I think we would have a sense of people's prior living circumstances, yes. How we capture that data I do not know.

CHAIR: Along the lines that we were talking of earlier today, there are allegations of substandard accommodation at Manus and Nauru. It certainly may well be substandard by Australian standards, although fully air-conditioned separate bedrooms and bathrooms do not seem to me to be all that different to what the average Australian family would experience. I just worry about these allegations of inadequate accommodation on those places and compare it with where these people have come from. I would imagine that most of them would think the sort of accommodation that is described would be palaces compared to what they have come from, if they are from a refugee camp, as I am sure many of them would claim. Are you going to take that on notice?

Mr Pezzullo: Mr Williams appears to be volunteering, so we will ask Mr Williams to have a go.

Mr Williams: I am volunteering, but I am not going to be able to offer you too much comfort. I am almost positive that we do not capture that data in the sort of aggregated way that we could report on sensibly, but it is certainly true that we do ask people for a lot of information about their previous living circumstances in order to make an assessment about their visa eligibility. It ranges from the sorts of questions we have to ask in some detail for refugee applicants to sometimes very basic information for other sorts of visas.

CHAIR: Is it worth, on notice, asking you to give us a general commentary on that, or is that just too difficult?

Mr Williams: We will do our best, but it is not the sort of information that—it is usually held on case files as part of the kind of text material that is held or in the computer in that sense. So we

will have a go, but I do not want to give you false hope.

CHAIR: Do not spend too much time on it. I understand that Mr Quaedvlieg indicated earlier to the committee that he would not be available after the dinner break, which the committee accepted. Thank you for advising us. But there will be other officers here should things come up that need your assistance. We will continue with outcome 1.

Answer:

An applicant is asked about living arrangements where that information is relevant to their visa application or their claim for protection. That information, once collected, remains on the applicant's file but is not collated by the Department.